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FOR ESTH OFFICERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SENV](#) [GCC](#)
SUBJECT: POLIO LETTERS TO GCC HEALTH MINISTERS

¶1. This is an urgent action request. As follow-up to last week's visit to GCC capitals by a State/USAID/CDC team in furtherance of the U.S./OIC polio eradication initiative, Posts are requested to send the following letter from Ambassadors to host country health ministers as quickly as possible. The Ministers are meeting February 2-3 in Abu Dhabi and agreed to add polio to their agenda. A positive statement on polio from the Ministers would be an important step for the initiative. Contacts in several capitals asked for such a letter, and in the interest of time Posts should send the letter electronically as well as in hard copy form. Posts are also requested to deliver copies of the letter to foreign ministries and to other host government officials who met with the polio team. Jeddah is requested to pass the text of the letter to OIC officials with a request that the OIC send similar letters to the GCC Ministers.

¶2. Begin text

(Salutation)

I write in support of the joint initiative by the United States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for the final eradication of polio, one of the commitments announced in President Obama's Cairo speech last year. Polio remains endemic in three OIC member States (Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan) and has reinfected a number of other OIC members which were previously polio-free. Since 1988 the WHO has led the Global Polio Eradication Initiative with the support of many countries, including (host country), which has succeeded in reducing the number of polio cases worldwide by 99 percent.

The challenge of eliminating the final one percent of polio cases will be the most difficult of all. The remaining polio-infected areas are beset by conflict and poverty, and local capacity to confront this disease is often weak. The rapid return of polio into previously polio-free countries shows the danger of failing to eradicate it. The only way to control polio is to eliminate it completely. We have the technical means to do so; what is needed now is renewed political will and the necessary resources.

The GCC and its Member States, as an influential group within the OIC, and an important group of States in its own right, is uniquely positioned to respond through diplomatic measures, technical and in-kind assistance, and by working through international Islamic institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank and Islamic funds and charities. Polio eradication is an opportunity for the GCC and its Member States to have an immediate impact on an humanitarian issue of global importance that has significant consequences for the Muslim community.

The GCC Health Ministers meeting in Abu Dhabi offers an opening to take an important step in this direction. I urge you and your fellow Ministers to issue a clear statement of support and commitment for the OIC polio campaign and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

End text.

¶3. Department thanks Posts for taking immediate action on this request. Department contact is Edwin Brown, OES/IHB, 202-647-3649.

CLINTON